Central American NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the Central American Group of the Spanish Main Society.
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EDITORIAL

I have decided this year not to host a meeting of the Spanish Main in Manchester. Unfortunately too many meals were unpaid for last year, and I do not feel the Society should have to bear the cost. One particular member who did not arrive still has not had the courtesy to contact me over this matter.

The joint meeting of the Chile and CA groups in February was well received by all, and I hope to report to you on this meeting in the next issue.

Similarly I still await the Palmares report from India '89, and I hope to let you know how our members fared there.

Richard Payne, the British Commissioner, has sent photocopies and a detailed list of Nicaraguan fiscal stamps with a Perkins Bacon imprint. An article on these stamps appears on page 157 and I look forward to members' comment. Whilst you may not have the answer to some of the questions raised, perhaps someone could point me towards an archive or other source where the mystery could be unravelled. I must confess to a personal interest here!

Finally I would like to say that if any of our members who have never written an article before, but would like to try to do so, have a go, and I would be only too pleased to assist in any way. If your command of English as a foreign language or fear of English grammer is a problem, let me assure you I shall be only too pleased to assist with this. I make a point of correcting scripts so as not to embarrass the author or detract from the philatelic content, and I sincerely hope that such fears are not preventing any of you from putting pen to paper. I started writing in this magazine, and thanks to the help of the late Bernard Davies, who corrected me on many occasions, I progressed to 'greater things'.

Mike Birks

COSTA RICAN POSTAL STATIONERY FOR GOVERNMENT USE

by Hector R Mena, Editor of Socorico

An article by Finn Stjernholck in Central American Newsletter (March 87) describes Costa Rican postal stationery. In a follow-up article (CANL December 87) a couple of items are illustrated and described as missing from the previous article. They were classified as official postal stationery.

We would like to review this very small chapter of Costa Rican postal stationery.

Until about 1945 the official mail was franked with official postal stamps. The last set was issued in 1937 and the last stamp was a re-order of the 10c airmail of 1934 (Scott C05, SG 388) in 1944 (Decree 26, La Gaceta, October 10, 1944). Since that date the Government Dependencies have used 'penalty' or free franking stationery. The only exceptions to this situation were the use of the 10c envelope of 1903 (H&G 6) and the 2c and 5c envelopes of 1923 (H&G 12 and 13) with overprints by several Government offices as was well described in Finn Stjernholck's article. These 1903 and 1923 envelopes were overprinted probably in the middle of the 1940's.

A second item that has a semi-official origin is the airmail envelope described by Derek Palmer. There is no decree authorising its issue and the number of envelopes printed is unknown, but it exists in two sizes (figure 1). H&G catalogue uses the date of 1940 for its issue, but we believe that it was printed between 1944 and 1947. During that period the well known philatelist Alvaro Bonilla Lara was the Minister of Finances. Until about 1966 the Ministry of Finances was in charge of issuing all postal items. The envelopes were used by the Figueres administration after the fall of the Picado administration in April of 1948, and a corner card was printed on some of the small envelopes identifying the new administration (figure 2, below).

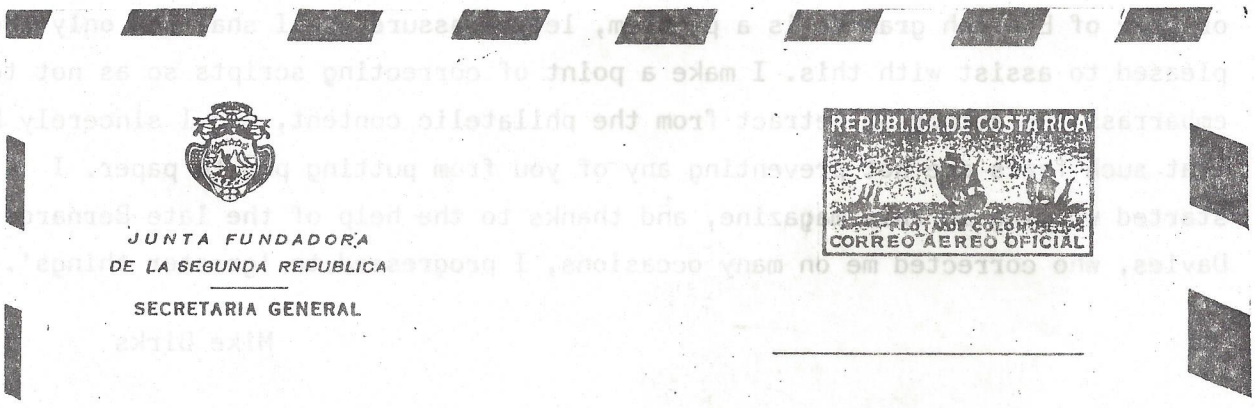


Figure 2

The envelopes (figure 2) were used for private purposes as is shown in figure 3 (below), which is a cover sent by Alvaro Bonilla (see signature under design) to Mr Derek Palmer in Chile. On the back there is a meter mark and receiving mark of Santiago. Used envelopes have the seal of the respective Government office and the signature of a senior officer. Since the Figueres administration the seal has been enough to confirm the free franking rights. One of the first acts of the Figueres administration was the regulation of the free franking (Decree 20 of May 5, 1948) and the reorganization of the San Jose Post Office. Unfortunately we have not seen the text of these decrees.

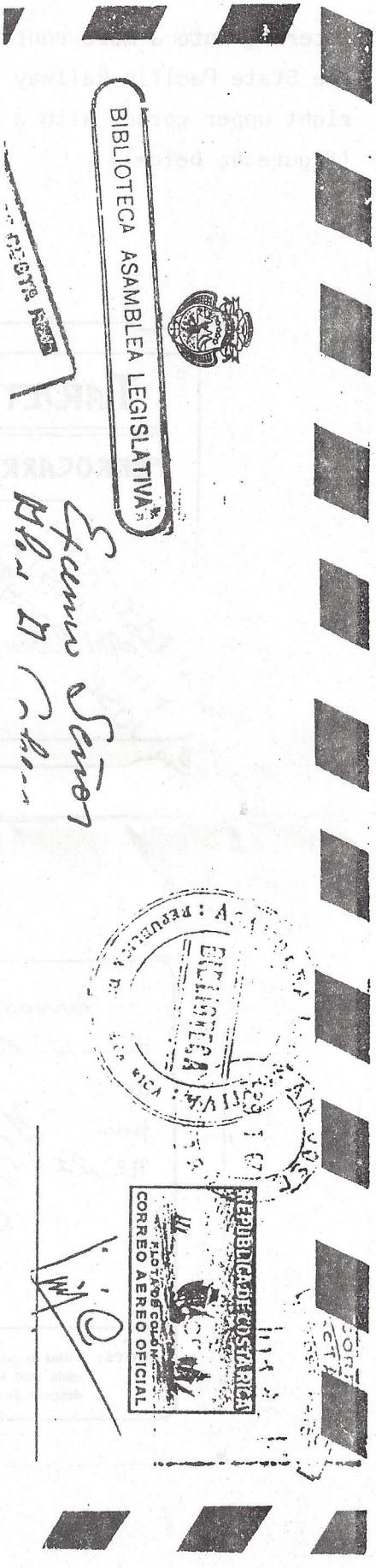
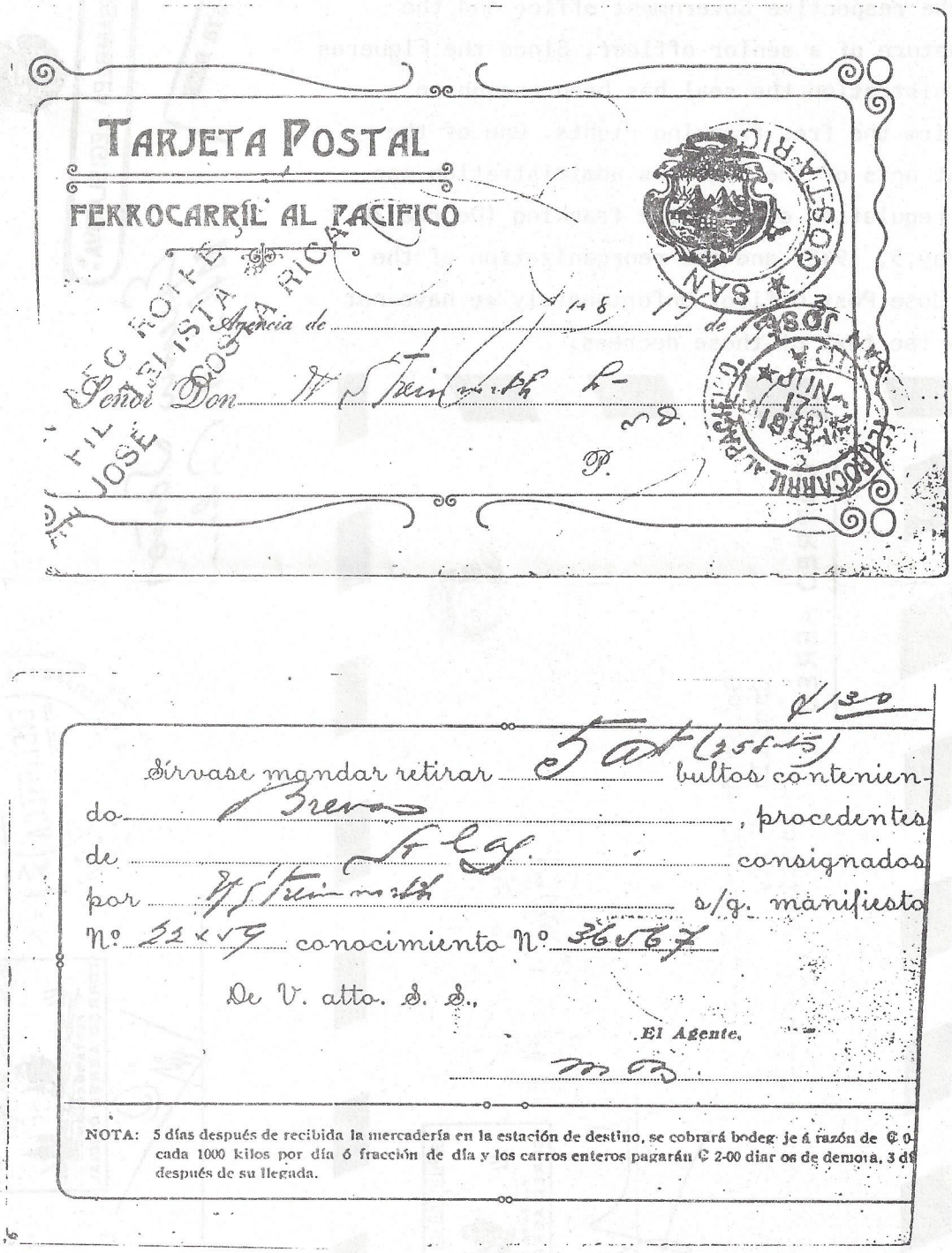


Figure 1 (above)

Figure 3 (left)

Entering into a more controversial area we want to describe other items. In 1913 the State Pacific Railway printed a corner card with the Coat of Arms in the right upper corner with a message on the back to announce the arrival of freight (figure 4, below).



TARJETA POSTAL

FERROCARRIL AL PACIFICO

FERROCARRIL PACIFICO COSTA RICA

SAN JOSE COSTA RICA

JUN 17 1913

Agencia de ... de 1913

Señor Don ...

Sírvase mandar retirar 5 bultos contenien-
do Frenos, procedentes
de Flg. consignados
por ... s/g. manifiesto
Nº 22 x 79 conocimiento Nº 26767

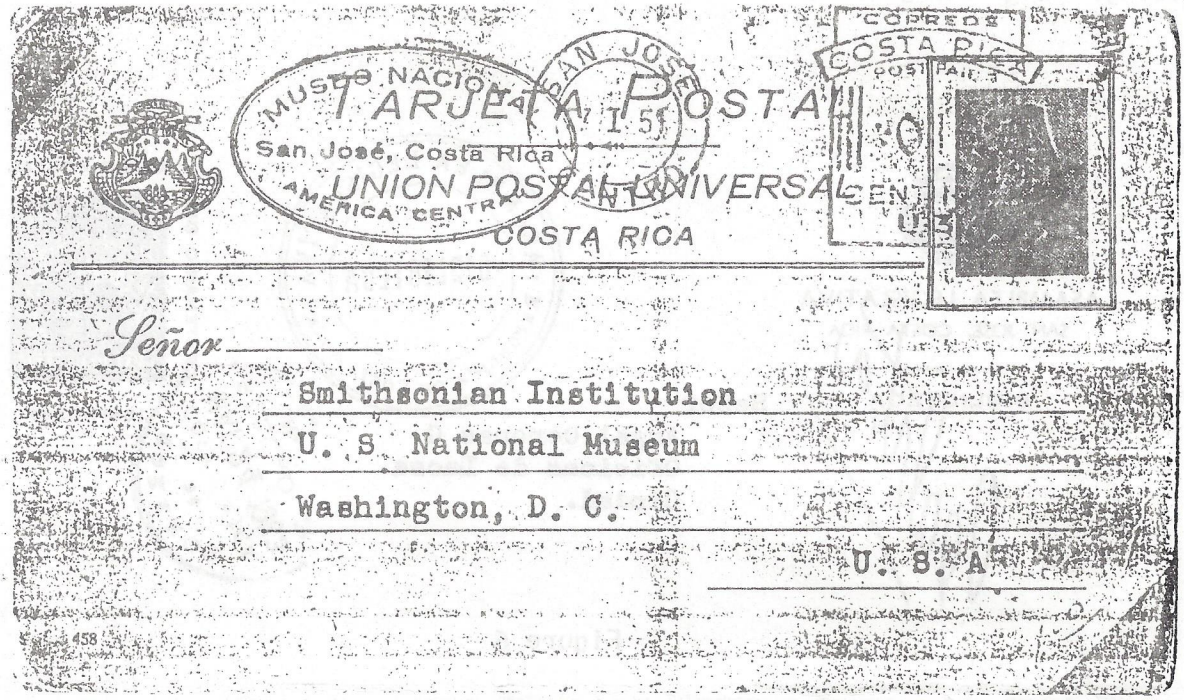
De V. atto. S. S.,

El Agente.

NOTA: 5 días después de recibida la mercadería en la estación de destino, se cobrará bodeg je á razón de ₡ 0-
cada 1000 kilos por día ó fracción de día y los carros enteros pagarán ₡ 2-00 diar os de demora, 3 d
después de su llegada.

Figure 4

In 1951 the National Museum printed a card with an illustration of an Indian artefact in the right upper corner with a message on the back to acknowledge the receipt of publications (figure 5, below).



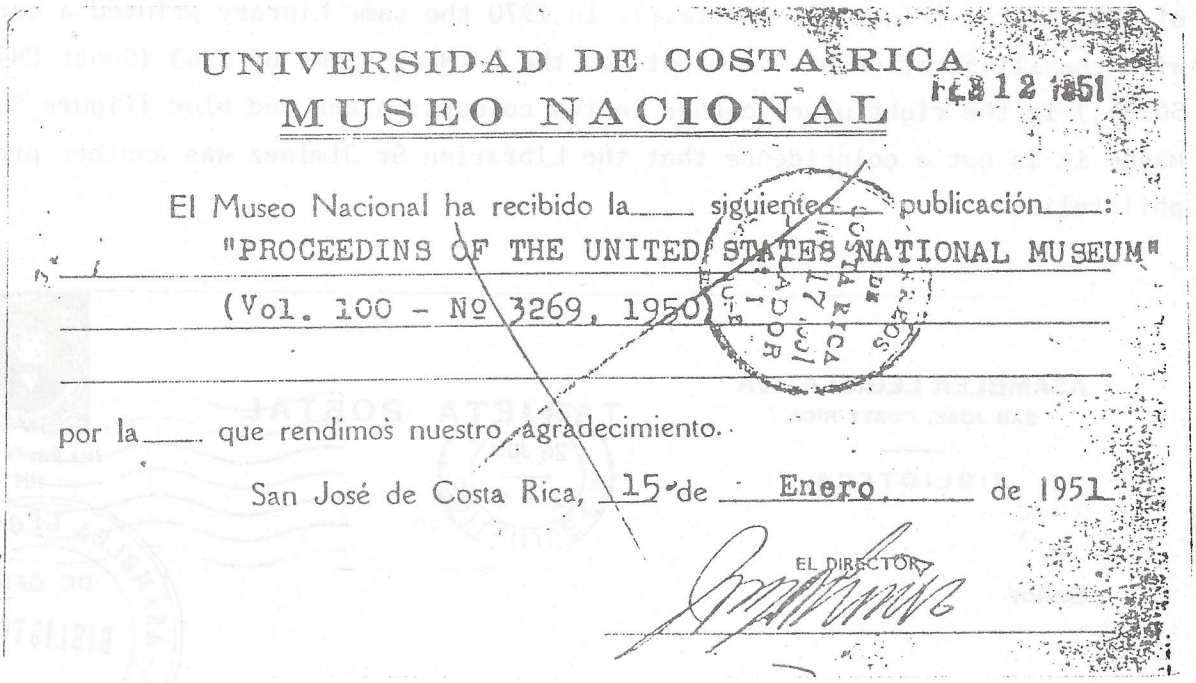

UNIVERSIDAD DE COSTA RICA
MUSEO NACIONAL
FEB 12 1951
El Museo Nacional ha recibido la siguiente publicación:
"PROCEEDINS OF THE UNITED STATES NATIONAL MUSEUM"
(Vol. 100 - Nº 3269, 1950)
por la que rendimos nuestro agradecimiento.
San José de Costa Rica, 15 de Enero de 1951
EL DIRECTOR

Figure 5

The Library of the National Congress issued a card and an envelope, which also had a message on the back to acknowledge receipt of publications. The envelopes appeared in 1963 and were small (size 6¾") with a facsimile of a 4 Real stamp of 1883, in black, surrounded by the legend "Centenary of the Costa Rican Postage Stamp" (figure 6, below).

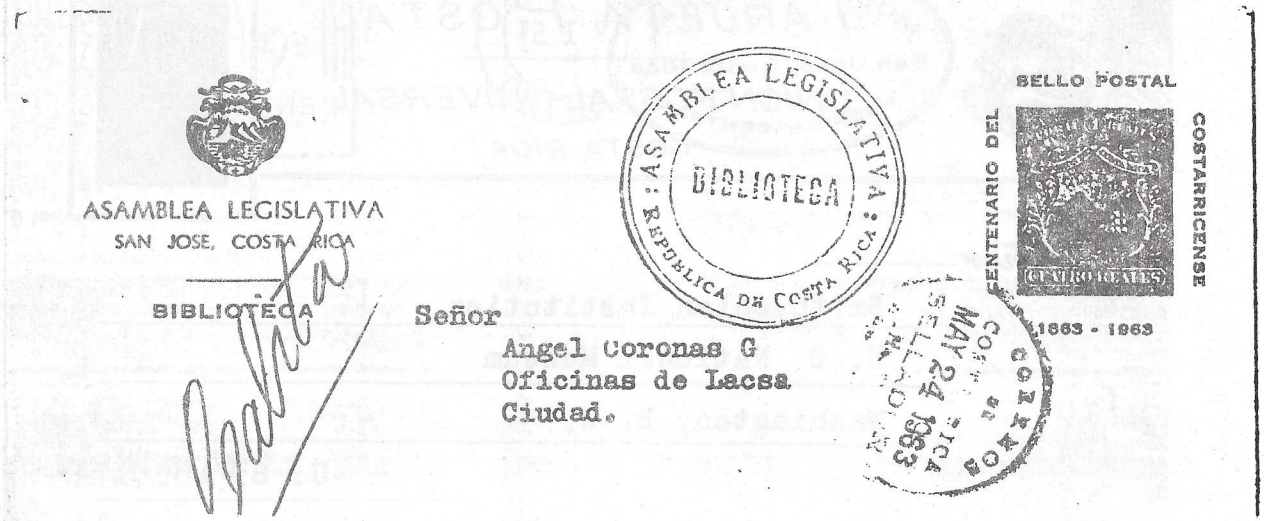


Figure 6

Another large (size 10) airmail envelope has the facsimile of the 1 peso stamp of 1883 in red (figure 7, overleaf). In 1970 the same Library printed a card with the illustration of the middle of the J R Mora stamp of 1943 (Scott C87, SG 341) in the right upper corner in two colours: black and blue (figure 8, below). Maybe it is not a coincidence that the Librarian Sr Jiminez was another prominent philatelist.

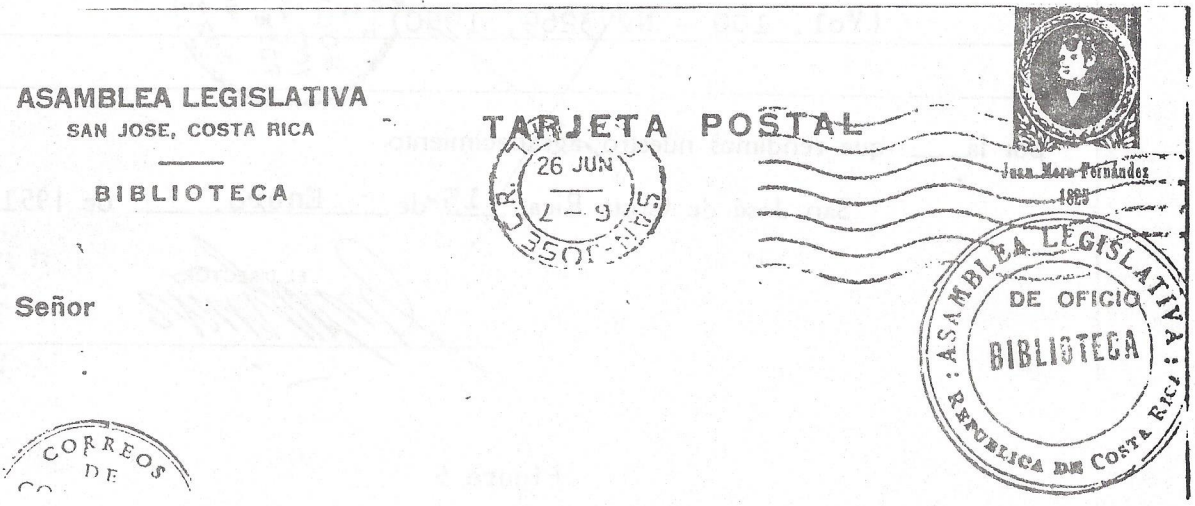


Figure 8

After 1966 the power to issue postal items was transferred from the Ministry of Finances to the Central Bank. Between 1963 and 1964 the authority was unclear since the Minister of Government was signing the stamp issuing decrees (the Postal Office has been a dependency of this Ministry). However, at no time the Railways, Museum, or Library had those powers. It is our opinion that this postal material, and similar that we may not have seen, should not be considered official or semi-official postal stationery but only official or free-franking postcards. They are interesting to complement a postal stationery exhibit, but they do not have the credentials to be included in a postal stationery listing.

Note: Most of these illustrations are from the Dale Barton Collection.

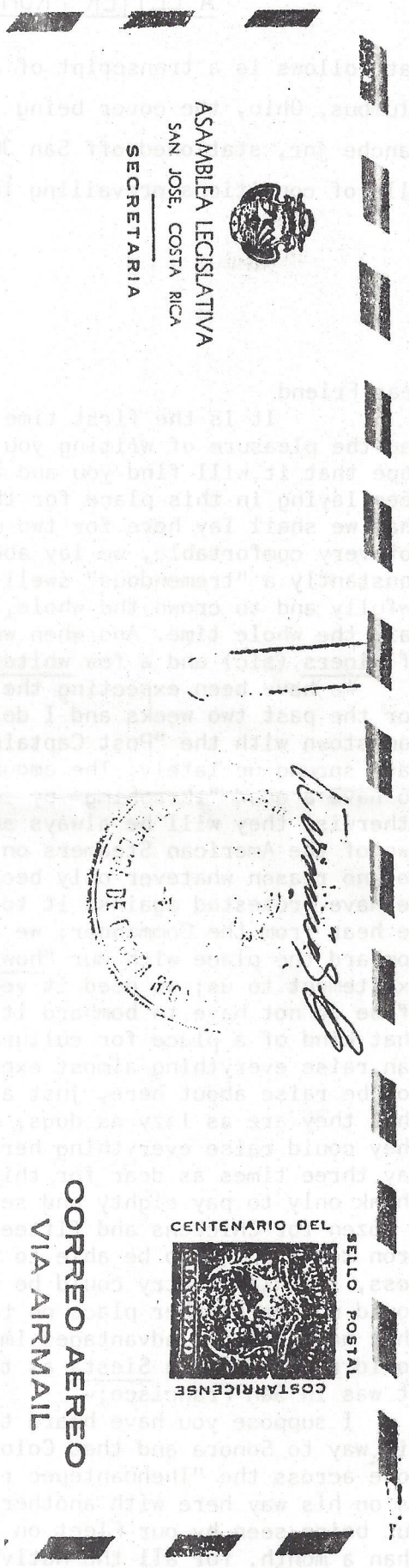


Figure 7 (right)

HONDURAS - Another Bogus Cover?

Several replies have been received regarding the Honduran bisect illustrated in our January issue. All confirm that Mr van Rijn's cover is undoubtedly genuine, and give some background to the events leading up to the usage of bisected stamps. I shall collate this information and print it in the form of an article in a future issue.

My thanks to Henry Madden, Richard Washburn and Jose Mejia.

A LETTER FROM SAN JUAN DE NICARAGUA 1857

What follows is a transcript of a letter from the collection of Richard Graham of Columbus, Ohio, the cover being illustrated opposite. The letter, from Charles La Blanche jnr, stationed off San Juan in the US Sloop of War 'St Louis' in 1857, tells of conditions prevailing in the country at that time.

United States Ship St Louis
San Juan de Nicaragua
April 24th 1859

Dear Friend

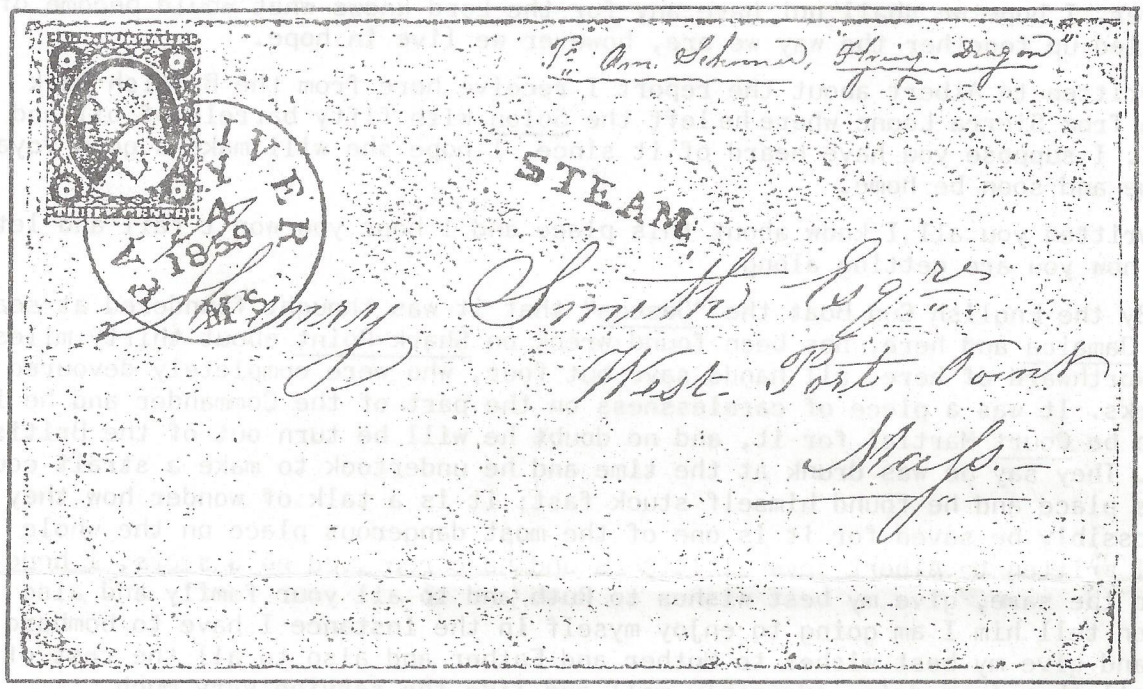
It is the first time since I have been on this Station, that I have had the pleasure of writing you a few lines which leave me at present well and hope that it will find you and all the rest of your family the same. We have been laying in this place for the last two months, and there is a good prospect that we shall lay here for two months longer, and I can assure you that it is not very comfortable, we lay about four miles outside the bar and there is constantly a "tremendous" swell from the NE, that makes us jump and rolled about awfully and to crown the whole, we have rain about fourteen times in a week oe'r rain the whole time. And when we go ashore there is nothing to be seen but a set of Nigers (sic) and a few whites who are worse than the Niggers.

We have been expecting the Flag Ship "Roanoke" and the Commodore Mr Cluney for the past two weeks and I do not know whether he will come or send the Jamestown with the "Post Captain "Gardner" to settle some difficulties that have sprung up lately. The amount of it is that the Nicaraguan Government wants to have a good "thrashing" by the United States and then they will keep cool, otherwise they will be always some trouble with our Government. They have seized two of the American Steamers on the Lake and have put the Americans in prison for no reason whatever only because they were afraid they would bring Filibusters, We have protested against it to no avail and we are now going to act as soon as we hear from the Commander; we are all ready to proceed in the intention to bombard the place with our "howitchers" and Launches - It will be a little excitement to us; we need it very much; and we shall be very much disappointed if we do not have to bombard it. I suppose being a farmer you would like to know what kind of a place for culture this is, well the land is admirably good, you can raise everything almost except irish potatoes, and I do not see why it could not be raise about here, just as well as anywhere else, but the amount of it is, that they are as lazy as dogs, eat and sleep is the order of the day with them. They could raise everything here and sell it cheap, instead of that we have to pay three times as dear for things here than we have to pay in the United States, Think only to pay eighty and seventy-five cents a dozen for eggs and eight dollars a dozen for Chickens and fifteen cents a pound for beef that you have to put cast iron teeth in to to be able to eat any of it, it is all on account of their laziness, if this country could be populated by some of the New England Farmers, there would not be another place on the surface of the Globe to be compared to this. They have all the advantages imaginable to make it a flourishing country, but they would rather take a Siesta as they call it than to make it so, the same thing as it was in San Francisco;-

I suppose you have heard that General Walker had gone to San Francisco on his way to Sonora and that Colonel Kinney and all the rest of Walker's Off: had gone across the "Thehuantepec route" to meet him, there is no doubt but what he is on his way here with another gang of Filibusters, if he can enter here without being seen by our Fleet on the Pacific side, the country will be his in less than a month, for all the Native Population wants to have Walker at their head, they seem to be sure that he will be here in less than fifteen days, I wish he would land somewhere, without being seen by any of our Ships, for we are bound to

continued on page 156

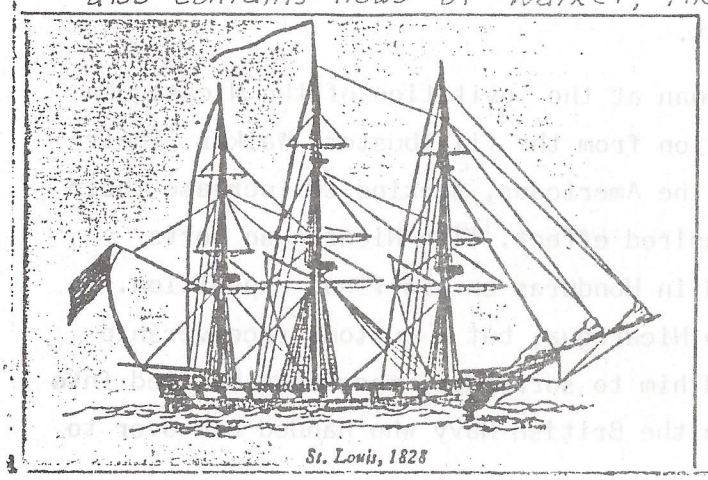
United States Ship St. Louis
San Juan de Nicaragua
April 24th 1859



From aboard the U.S. Sloop of War "St. Louis", off San Juan de Nicaragua. Carried north aboard the schooner "Flying Dragon, a 3¢ 1857 stamp evidently having been supplied by the sender. The schooner Captain apparently waived his two cents ship letter fee by turning the letter over to the Captain of a coastal steamer - perhaps one of the Long Island Sound boats. This is evidenced by the Fall River c.d.s. of May 24, 1859, and the STEAM marking of the Fall River post office.

Oddly enough, this saved the recipient of the letter 2¢, as the 2¢ STEAM fee was not, during this period charged due, even tho paid the Captain as was a ship letter fee.

The cover contains an extremely interesting letter, telling of a probable bombardment of the town, the local government having siezed an American steamer on "the lake" (Nicaragua?). The letter also contains news of Walker, the filibuster.


St. Louis, 1828

The "St. Louis", of 700 tons and rated at 18 guns was a "light cruiser" of her day. Between 1828 - her first commissioning, and the Civil War, she saw service in every ocean of the globe and went completely around it at least once. The "St. Louis" was stricken from the Navy list in 1906.

stop him; and raise the old Harry in the interim and take the Country it would really be a good deal both for everyone concerned and better for the United States also. There are now here one English Steam Sloop of five guns and a small cutter of two guns and ourselves and two small American schooners (trading) the Flying Dragon of Ingham and the Arminta of Baltimore both trading with log wood for New York direct. The Bar across the Mouth of the River, which had filled up so fast last month and blocked the harbour entirely is gradually going, and there is no doubt but what it will be deep enough next month so to be able to let us go inside. We have been very lucky indeed, we have not had any cases of fever yet and the English had thirty on the list last month and they have at present ten on the list with fever. I hope we shall not have any for the Lord knows what would become of us, huddled up together the way we are, however we live in hope.

I have written to Albert about the report I receive here from the British Bark Valiante from Sierra Leone where he left the Solon with fifty barrels of oil and all well. I suppose you have heard of it since. I hope she will make a good voyage this time and soon be home.

I have written you all I know about this place and I hope you won't fail and let me know how you are getting along.

By the By the English Gun Boat the "Jasena" that it was thought foundered at sea, between Jamaica and here, has been found wreck on Shark Point about thirty miles to the Northward of here, all hands save but four, who were completely devoured by the sharks. It was a piece of carelessness on the part of the Commander and he is going to be Court Martial for it, and no doubt he will be turn out of the British Service. They say he was drunk at the time and he undertook to make a strait course for this place and he found himself stuck fast; it is a talk of wonder how they could possibly be saved for it is one of the most dangerous place on the whole Coast. I written to Albert several letters and have received no answers, I hope you won't do the same, give my best wishes to Ruth and to all your family and also Uncle Ben tell him I am going to enjoy myself in the instance I have to bombard the place, and give my best wishes to Mother and Father and also to all the rest of the folks tell them I am doing admirably well and like the service very much

Receive my best wishes and respects write as often as you can from

Your affectionate friend

Chas La Blanche jnr

I send you enclosed my address.

Life in San Juan certainly was full of risks; the town had been bombarded on 13 July 1854, when over 200 rounds demolished most of the town, and the Marines landed and burned the rest. I can not find another reference to a bombardment, so perhaps Charles La Blanche was denied his enjoyment.

The British and French ships were in San Juan at the invitation of the Nicaraguan Government who had sought European protection from the fillibuster, Walker. Their presence was a source of consternation to the Americans, seeking to increase their influence in the region, but it had the desired effect. With Nicaraguan ports blocked by foreign warships, Walker landed in Honduras on his final expedition. It was his intention to travel overland to Nicaragua, but a customs receivership imposed by the British at Trujillo ordered him to surrender, whereupon he fled into the jungle with his men. He surrendered to the British Navy who handed him over to the Hondurans, who shot him.

MPB

NICARAGUA: WATERLOW v PERKINS BACON

by MICHAEL P BIRKS

Some of you will be aware that my International competetive display comprises the early Waterlow issues of Nicaragua. Attributing all of these stamps has not been easy: the Arms type and the Liberty/Locomotive types all bear an imprint under the stamp, the Public School Tax stamps are known imperforate from Waterlow Salemen's sample books, the railway tickets are found entered in the Waterlow archive and the small fiscal stamps are listed as a Waterlow product by Gibbons. But are they?

It came as quite a surprise to be shown these latter small fiscal stamps in imprint blocks bearing the legend "PERKINS, BACON & C^{O}. L^{D}. GRABADORES, LONDON." (Grabadores = Engravers). My own plate proof sheet of 100 (10 x 10) in black, without value, bears no imprint, or date.

Values known with imprint are as follows:

Undated		Dated 31 MAR 1915 (Cordoba Currency)	
5 centavos	orange yellow	1 centavo	pale blue
10 centavos	turqoise blue	5 centavos	orange yellow
25 centavos	olive green	10 centavos	turqoise blue
1 peso	yellow brown	50 centavos	green
5 pesos	violet	1 Cordoba	yellow brown
10 pesos	dark grey	2½ Cordobas	aniline pink
25 pesos	aniline pink		

This raises many questions. Did Waterlows play any part in the production of these stamps? (My researches in the archive found the School Tax stamps but no reference to these). Why do plate proofs, and blocks of postally surcharged stamps lack the imprint? Did Perkins Bacon engrave the die or simply produce the plates from a Waterlow die? Did Perkins Bacon produce a second printing, following a Waterlow printing, and added their imprint to the plates, these reprints finding only fiscal usage?

Your comments are urgently invited before I send my display to London 1990!

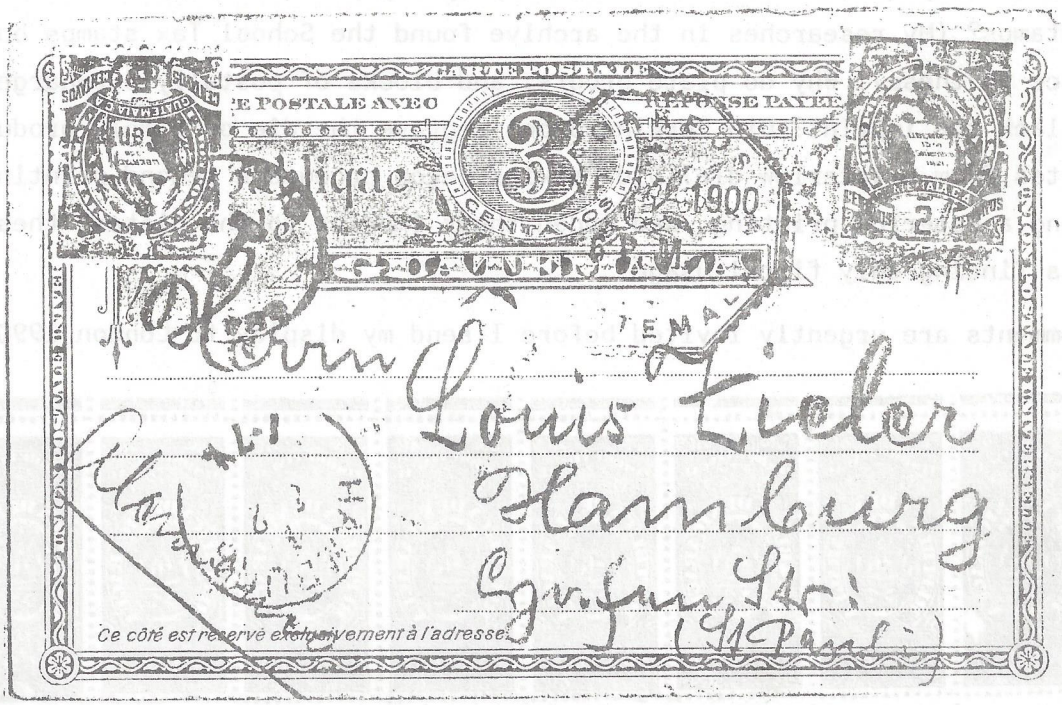
GUATEMALA: DOUBLE POSTAGE ON 'LATE' OVERSEAS MAIL by CÉCILE GRUSON

In the 1890's there two overseas mail departures, namely:

1. Weekly from Livingston: ordinary mail had to be deposited before 10 a.m. on the day of departure and registered items before 5 p.m. on the day before. Departure was on THURSDAYS in 1893 and on SATURDAYS from about 1895, when 129 miles of the Northern Railway between the coast and El Rancho had been finished and replaced two days of mule-back travel.
2. From Puerto San José: mail steamers provided five departures monthly to the south serving Europe and the East Coast of the USA, and four departures to the north, serving the US West Coast and Asia. Mail had to be deposited before 6 p.m. in order to be included in the mail bag leaving the next morning by the early train.

However both "Itinerarios de los dias en que se recibe y despacha correspondencia" of 1893 and the "Souvenir Album" of the 1897 Exposition state that mail posted later than 6 p.m. would still be included in the outgoing mail of the next morning provided it was put in the mailbox of the General Direction of Mails FRANKED AT DOUBLE RATE OF POSTAGE. In the 1930's this special evening service at double the rate of postage was available at the "Servicio Nocturno" counter.

In the C20th, there were no special cancellations for this 'late' mail, although the situation changed later. Since this service only concerned unregistered items covers are very difficult to identify, as there is no way to distinguish them from double or multiple weight items. The postal stationery card illustrated below is, in my opinion, an example of this double rate for 'late' mail.



Although the datestamp it timed 6 p.m., it was probably the latest time used on mail. The date of January 12 corresponds to the steamer sailing of January 13. Information regarding similar items, via the Editor, is invited.